

Two men arrested in Bend woman's murder

by Cheryl McDermott

Human remains found Tuesday in a shallow grave in a remote area on Forest Service land southeast of Sunriver are believed to be those of Nicole Hutchings, a young woman missing since November 2004. Two Bend men have been charged with kidnapping, conspiracy, and murder.

Loren Allen Bowers (L), Craig Allen Whiting (R) — DCJ Photos

Nicole — Nikki — Marie Hutchings, missing since Nov. 1, 2004

Nicole — Nikki — Marie Hutchings was last seen about 7:30 p.m. November 1, 2004, at her home in the 63200 block of NE Gallop Court in Bend. She was 21 years old at the time of her disappearance, and Bend Police detectives have been working multiple leads from a variety of sources since that time, said Captain Kevin Sawyer.

More recent information gleaned from follow-up investigation pointed to two suspects responsible for Hutchings' death — Loren Allen Bowers, 37, of 19470 Lone Cow Drive, and 26-year old Craig Allen Whiting of 5475 SW Lynx Lane. Both men were arrested and lodged in the Deschutes County Jail where they are charged with aggravated murder, murder, conspiracy to commit murder, and kidnapping.

During the past few days, detectives conducted interviews, examined evidence, and served search warrants in connection to the information obtained, said Sawyer.

Tuesday, detectives searched Bowers' vehicle, home, and property at 19470 Lone Cow Drive in Bend, and seized evidence that will be processed by the Oregon State Police (OSP) crime lab, the chief reported.

Detectives also identified a crime scene in the remote area, and with the assistance of OSP detectives and crime lab personnel, Deschutes County deputies and US Forest Service law enforcement officers, began processing the scene where — probable — human remains believed to be Nicole Hutchings were found. — The excavation of this site is continuing and the remains will be sent to the Oregon State Medical Examiners Office for confirmation and identification, — Chief Sawyer said.

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